

I. Call to Order

A regular session of the Gresham Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Drechsler on the 14th of June 2021, at 6:32 PM online via Zoom. The meeting was digitally recorded and minutes prepared by Jennifer McGinnis.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Paul Drechsler, Chair
Richard Anderson, Vice-Chair
Michael Bennett
Jef Kaiser
Tim Kamp
Laura Pramuk
Sue Ruonala
Phil Wich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Richard Anderson
Jason Ping

COUNCIL LIAISONS PRESENT: Vince Jones-Dixon

COUNCIL LIAISONS ABSENT: Sue Piazza

STAFF PRESENT: David Berniker, Urban Design & Planning Director
Sarale Hickson, Planner II
Amanda Lunsford, Administrative Analyst
Kevin McConnell, Senior City Attorney
Mary Phillips, Senior Comprehensive Planner
Jim Wheeler, Urban Design Manager

II. Middle Housing Work Session #5

Marcy McInnelly, consultant from JLA, presented on the middle housing draft code, focusing mostly on their recommended Design Guidelines and Standards. There are different sets of standards for 1-4 units, townhouses, and cottage clusters.

The topics presented included:

- Entry orientation:

- Proposed standard: At least one primary entrance per lot must open directly onto the street.
- For PC consideration: Should an entry from the street be required for all ground floor units fronting the street?
- Window coverage:
 - Proposed standard: Minimum of 20% of total street-facing façade must be windows/doors utilizing clear glass and entry doors.
 - For PC consideration: Should there be a minimum transparency requirement on facades not facing the street?
- Garage/parking location and width:
 - Proposed standard: Garages/parking areas not allowed in front of dwelling. Attached garages set back 4 feet from front of façade. Combined width of garage doors and outdoor parking must not exceed 20 feet or 50% of street frontage.
 - For PC consideration: Should garages follow accessory structure setback standard or 20-ft base district standard?
- Driveway approach:
 - Proposed standard: Encourage lots to take access from alleys. Curb cuts must not occupy more than 34% of lot frontage or 28 feet, whichever is less.
 - For PC consideration: Should subdivisions be required to pair driveways to allow more on-street parking and street trees?
- Private/common open space:
 - Proposed standard: Minimum of 5% of total lot area flexible open space, either private, public, or combination. Must include 2 trees per lot.
 - For PC consideration: Should the City retain, remove, or expand buffers for flag lots?
- Pedestrian connections:
 - Proposed standard: Must provide continuous connections between entries, parking, and street/sidewalk. Minimum path width of 3 feet.
 - For PC consideration: Should the minimum width of walkways be increased to 4 feet?

Ms. McInelly also went over potential design standards specific to townhouses to provide unit definition and standards specific to cottage clusters to promote openness and community.

Ms. Phillips went over the project time frame, with a targeted adoption of the end of 2021.

The Commission discussed the following with each topic:

- Entry orientation:
 - Commissioner Kaiser said that an entry facing the street should be required for safety purposes. Commissioner Ruonala agreed.
 - Commissioner Pramuk said that requiring an entry on the street may limit creative design and be too prescriptive. Chair Drechsler agreed.

- Commissioner Wich agreed with Commissioner Pramuk and Chair Drechsler that as long as the safety factors are addressed, the entrance wouldn't necessarily need to be in the front.
- Commissioner Ruonala said that on a recent project, the Design Commission felt the front door entry on the street was important. Commissioner Kamp added that the Design Commission was looking for individual entrances that front the street but he would defer to them on this topic.
- Mr. Berniker said that doors facing the street has been proven to increase safety.
- Commissioner Bennett said that alleys are one of the biggest safety issues, so that needs to be taken into consideration if parking is located behind homes.
- Commissioner Kaiser suggested using the language that access should be visible and accessible from the street. Ms. McInelly responded that that is a good goal if it can be more defined with clear and objective language.
- The Commissioners agreed that the Design Commission should be consulted on this standard.
- Window coverage:
 - Ms. Phillips said that Design Commission can decide on a number but it would be helpful to get a direction from the Planning Commission.
 - Commissioner Kaiser said that having some type of transparent opening on the non-street side is important for safety and adds to the livability inside. Commissioner Ruonala agreed.
 - Chair Drechsler said that he prefers to keep some flexibility but thinks there could be some value in making this a requirement.
- Garage/parking location and width:
 - Commissioner Ruonala said that she has concerns with small garages being used for townhouses. If garages can't fit a regular size vehicle, they aren't used for cars and the cars end up on the street. Garages need to be usable.
 - Commissioner Wich said he doesn't care how far the garage is set back but is concerned about the 50% requirement as it would apply to narrow homes because the garage would also be narrow and potentially unusable. Ms. Phillips responded that all lots would get 20 feet of street frontage.
 - Ms. Hickson reminded Commissioners that the City is only allowed to require one parking spot and this will be met with the 20-foot setback for the garage. With current single-family and duplex development, most are providing much more parking than is required.
- Driveway approach:
 - Commissioner Anderson asked how driveways will be shared if neighbors do not do their share of the maintenance.
 - Ms. Hickson said that many subdivisions are coming in with zero or very few street trees due to wide driveways. Shared driveways would make it possible to have more street trees.
 - Commissioner Wich said that anything shared is going to have its issues but the opportunity to provide more trees is more important.

- Commissioner Ruonala said that she doesn't feel like trees will survive in townhomes and rowhome developments because the trees will not be viable on small lots. She has seen some developments where the corner lot keeps all of the trees, but acknowledged that this may not work for infill housing.
- Commissioner Kamp said that he is struggling with how to balance the use of the alley with a softer streetscape. Mr. Wheeler said that one option would be a lot coverage requirement. Setbacks currently serve as the maximum lot coverage requirement but another standard could be set.
- Chair Drechsler said he shares Commissioner Kamp's feelings and does not think the proposed language about encouraging access from alleys fits in Gresham. If the garages are in the back, community interaction will be lost since people will not be in front of their houses and the roads will be used for deliveries instead. Commissioner Anderson agreed with Chair Drechsler and added that he is concerned about the loss of yard space.
- Private/common open space:
 - Commissioner Kaiser clarified that the two-tree requirement would be in addition to required street trees. Ms. Hickson said that this could be used for smaller trees that don't work well on the street but work well in backyards.
 - Chair Drechsler said that permeable surfaces don't work well in the City and are hard to maintain.
 - Commissioner Wich said that 5% seems like a small amount but it is better than zero. Two trees per lot seems sufficient.
 - Commissioner Kamp agreed that 5% seems like a small amount, especially since it would apply across the board for a single-family or a multi-family unit.
 - Commissioner Wich and Commissioner Anderson both said the flag lot buffers should remain in place. Commissioner Ruonala said to maintain or even expand the flag lot buffers.
 - Commissioner Pramuk said that she liked the recommendations in the chart provided as an exhibit.
 - Commissioner Anderson asked if the street tree list is up to date because he sees conflicts with trees and utilities. Ms. Hickson responded that the list will be up for review again soon. Commissioner Wich said this also may be an enforcement issue.
 - Chair Drechsler said that he likes the 5% open space standard and the two tree per lot idea but does not want to be overly prescriptive about the type of trees that can be planted. He would prefer the approved tree list to be recommendations rather than requirements.
- Pedestrian connections:
 - Commissioner Bennett asked if the construction standards for residential areas are ADA compliant. Ms. Hickson responded that the public side, such as sidewalks, needs to be ADA compliant but the City can only encourage, not require, walkways on private lots to be ADA compliant.

- Chair Drechsler said that the 3-foot standard is adequate and it may be too prescriptive to widen it as it would limit room for landscaping and open yard area.
- Commissioner Ruonala said that she can see the argument for both sides.
- Commissioner Kaiser said that his opinion is to leave the standard at 3 feet.
- Townhouse:
 - Commissioner Kaiser said that this is a topic where the Design Commission should be involved. Commissioner Anderson agreed.
 - Commissioner Pramuk said that she would support a standard that includes design elements that encourage architecturally pleasing designs and blend in with existing development.
- Cottage clusters
 - Commissioner Wich said that a minimum amount of open space for cottage clusters sounds reasonable.
 - Commissioner Bennett asked who maintains the courtyard and if there would be any requirements for the developer. Ms. Hickson responded that a landscape maintenance agreement would need to be provided with development.
 - Commissioner Pramuk suggested that the amount of required open space be scaled with the size of the unit. Ms. McInelly responded that while they could adopt a separate cottage cluster ordinance that allows flexibility in size, based on the House Bill the maximum size of a cottage cluster unit is 900 sf, so the way it is currently written, 150sf would apply to all cottage cluster units.
- Article 4 Amendments
 - Ms. McInelly gave an overview of the proposed amendments to Article 4. The Commissioners did not have questions or comments.

Public Comment

Carol Rulla provided comments on the draft code:

- Maximum lot coverage and two paths in the code is something that should be considered.
- She asked if the 5% requirement for open space includes the setback area and if they should be considering 10-foot setbacks on all sides for all residential development.
- She agrees with having one primary entrance facing the street. She thinks window transparency on shared spaces and alley ways would be important, but not in backyards due to privacy concerns.
- The combined garage door and outdoor parking not exceeding 20 feet or 50% of the frontage is a reasonable standard. When driveways are front-facing, it makes it so that the lot has to be wider. Shared driveways or paired driveways is a good idea to increase street trees. Trees could be required in rain gardens. She thinks the 20-foot driveway length requirement needs to remain so that cars don't overhang in the sidewalk but doesn't think it is necessary for detached garages behind homes.
- Section 4.0132(c) about having more than one dwelling unit per lot needs to be modified, not just deleted because if it is deleted, it creates a loophole.

- The residential compatibility standards are proposed to be removed other than for single-family detached but she suggests applying something similar for middle housing to deal with situations such as taller new development coming in next to older one-story houses.
- She is concerned about there being a potential loophole for alterations/conversions of single-family detached buildings to middle housing not being subject to public facility standards.

III. City Council Subcommittee Liaison Summaries

Jef volunteered to be the neighborhood association liaison if someone took over as Historic Resources subcommittee liaison. No one volunteered. Chair Drechsler said that it is more important to cover Historic Resources.

City Council and Planning Commission are both going to send their top priorities to staff and staff will compile an agenda for the joint meeting.

IV. Other Business/Adjournment

Chair/Vice Chair Elections

Commissioner Pramuk nominated Commissioner Ruonala as Chair and herself as Vice Chair. Commissioner Ruonala declined the nomination for Chair saying that she is not the right person to take the lead. Commissioner Pramuk said that she is willing to be Vice Chair but is not comfortable being Chair. Commissioner Bennett declined nomination for either position. If the group cannot appoint a chair, the issue will be raised to City Council and the Mayor will appoint someone from the Planning Commission as Chair. Nominations were tabled until the June 28, 2021 meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Chairperson

Recording Assistant

Date

Date

A full recording of this meeting is available upon request.